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## REVIEWS OF RECENT BOOKS

In his "Giotto," published by the Macmillan Company, F. Mason Perkins has given as ordered and probable an account of the life and as satisfactory an estimate of the work of Giotto di Bondone as one could reasonably expect, considering the conflicting material with which he had to work. The fame and celebrity that have universally been accorded this artist make him one of the greatest and most striking personalities in the artistic annals of the Christian world, and yet there are few characters of any importance in the history of Italian art concerning whom we possess less certain or genuine information.

We are left to found our ideas of his private life and of his career as an artist almost entirely upon tradition, and upon such of his works as have been spared us through the centuries that have elapsed since he laid aside his brush. Vasari's monograph on Giotto, replete as it is with mistakes of fact and judgment, has oddly enough been the main source of information about him. Subsequent scholars and writers have done much toward clearing up many uncertain points respecting Giotto's life, but the best results of scholarship, those of Crowe and Cavalcaselle, are not accessible to the general reader. In his biography of the artist Mr. Perkins has made a generous use of the best material available, and has given the reader the benefit of an intimate personal acquaintance with the remains of Giotto's work.

Perhaps no personality exists in the artistic annals of Europe a true appreciation of whose work and influences depends more deeply on a thorough knowledge of his predecessors and contemporaries than is the case with Giotto. Mr. Perkins wisely regards his subject not less as the culminating figure of a movement long on foot in France and Italy than as the first of modern painters, and he wisely incorporates in his little volume an ample discussion of the artist's forerunners and contemporaries, following this with a detailed account of the artist's development and of his principal works. The text, as is the case with all the volumes of the Great Masters' Series, is adequately illustrated with reproductions designed to give a comprehensive idea of the great painter's art.

Another volume of the same series, of even greater interest to present-day students, is Malcolm Bell's "Rembrandt van Rijn," issued by the same publishers. As the writer well says, down to the middle of the present century the story of Rembrandt, as generally accepted, was nothing but a mass of more or less ill-natured fiction. His drunkenness, his luxury, his immorality, his avarice, were heaped together into a somewhat inconsistent midden-heap of infamy. But the

greatness of the man commanded the serious study of critics and scholars, and earnest efforts were made to give the true story of the artist's life, and to assign him his just rank as a painter and as an etcher.

The volume here noticed is but a condensation of Mr. Bell's more voluminous work published in 1899. The story of the painter's life and work has necessarily been to a considerable extent compressed, but everything essential has been retained. The chief omissions are the short descriptions of the pictures and the lists of the etchings, which, while occupying much space, were thought to be more suitable to a work of reference than to a handbook. The student who desires fuller information on these points is referred to the earlier and costlier volume.

In issuing the work in cheaper and more convenient form, and after fuller investigation and study, the author has not found it necessary to change or modify any of the opinions first expressed, and it is doubtful if a work more comprehensive and just and more in keeping with the needs of the student is obtainable. The biographical account of the great artist is especially full and entertaining, and the two divisions of the work devoted to Rembrandt as a painter and as an etcher leave little to be desired. The reissue of the work puts a most valuable monograph into the hands of all who are interested in the life and achievements of the greatest of the early Dutch painters.

The last two volumes of Houghton, Mifflin & Co.'s popular and instructive Riverside Art Series are "Tuscan Sculpture" and "Van Dyck," both by Estelle M. Hurl. "Tuscan Sculpture" was designed as a companion volume to "Greek Sculpture," a previous issue of the series, and comprises a collection of sixteen pictures reproducing works by Donatello, the Della Robbia, Mino da Fiesole, and other artists, with introduction and the usual appreciative interpretations. The author has aimed to make this set of pictures, studied side by side with that of the former work on sculpture, illustrate clearly the difference in spirit animating the two art periods represented.

The Tuscan sculpture of the Renaissance was developed under a variety of forms of which as many as possible are included within the limits of the book under consideration—the equestrian statue, the sepulchral monument, the ideal statue of saint and hero, as well as various forms of decorative art applied to the beautifying of churches and public buildings both within and without.

The volume on Van Dyck contains a collection of fifteen pictures and a portrait of the painter, with introduction and interpretation. This artist's fame as a portrait-painter, as the author rightly says, has so far overshadowed his other work that his sacred pictures are comparatively unfamiliar to the general public. The illustrations of the little volume are about equally divided between portraits and subject-pieces, and the selection is well calculated to give the reader an adequate idea of the scope of the painter's art.